



Lutheran Deaconesses

Pittsburgh — (RNS) — Two Lutheran deaconesses were observers at the annual Liturgical Day for nuns of the Pittsburgh Roman Catholic diocese. They were Deaconess Carol Jungermann of Holy Cross Lutheran church, Brushton (rear); and Sister Edith Fischer, in charge of chaplaincy service at Passavant Hospital (right). They are shown with nun-members of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission — Sister Edward Mary (left), and Sister Kevin. After the Liturgical Day, the Lutheran observers commented on parallels they found between Protestant and Catholic renewal. They cited the "sense of mission" being instilled in youth and the effort to get away from "the Sunday kind of faith" toward an everyday living of religion.

Many Laymen Still Lagging

By FRANCIS BRADLEY
Ministry of Laity, Rochester
Area Council of Churches

What does Ecumenism mean to a layman? What are they trying to accomplish with Ecumenism, and what is there in it for the layman? The average layman attending church today has little interest in the unification or uniting of all Christian Churches.

Most of the work today that has been done in this field has been done by the theologians and by church administrators. The average church-goer has had little opportunity to know what is going on unless he subscribes to many magazines and booklets that report on the subject or he reads some of the current books. To date not much has been done in the field of ecumenism (church union) in the local church.

We have remained very parochial in our orientation and our whole sphere of interest has been centered in the local churches where our families attend.

Until greater efforts are made by the local congregation to instruct their members on what is happening ecumenically and in the movement to church union, there is still much to be done. In addition to instruction, these local congregations are going to have to provide the practical opportunities for their people to get to know others who may be worshipping a little differently.

Our Rochester Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Commission of the Roman Catholic Diocese are beginning to answer this lack by providing "Open Houses" where members visit other churches; by regional united services during the Week of Christian Unity in January; by providing opportunities for lay people to meet together to learn about each other using the Living Room Dialogue approach.

It will take even greater work in this field to overcome the separation that has existed for hundreds of years. Obviously there is a wide gap between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches but there is still much to be done in narrowing the gap between Protestant Churches.

Why is unity so important? To the layman there are two apparent reasons — the first is that Our Lord wants us "to be one", and we have His word from the Bible for that; and secondly, Christian Churches need to be able to speak and act together. The complexities of our world today and the moral and theological questions raised demand more united front. We have found in most of the countries are a minority and that this has been accelerated since World War II. In such a world and particularly in those areas where Christianity has never been more than a minority it is utter stupidity and a disgrace to have Christianity presented as such a fragmented and disjointed group. Unity therefore becomes not just something desirable — it is a necessity.

The promise of a new era is especially evident in a new way in which the Decree of Ecumenism of the recent Vatican Council speaks of non-catholic Christians. No one can read it without being impressed by the respect shown for those outside the Roman obedience and by the care which is taken to understand their position and to state it fairly. Moreover, in-

stead of dogmatically insisting on their return to Rome as the only possible movement toward unity, the Decree is concerned with a movement toward Christ. From a Protestant angle this fresh orientation is of the highest consequences and provides many creative possibilities.

What does this ecumenism have to say about renewal in the Church today? Luckily today throughout many parts of the church there is a resurgence of interest in renewal, that is "making the church relevant today." The most outstanding case of renewal is the recent Vatican Council in which the Roman Catholic Church, compared to what it was five years ago and is today shows tremendous changes. In Protestant churches there has also been a renewal movement with great impact and most notably in a resurgence of the laity. Many things have happened to re-emphasize that the laity (the People of God) are the church and that every member of the Church has a vital and necessary part in the work and mission of the Church.

Spectator-ism and reliance upon the professional clergy to do the entire work of the Church has begun to disappear. This resurgence of the laity has resulted in lay people coming to the understanding and conclusion that if they have a job to do — they must have better training. This lay ministry must include work both in the Church as well as outside the institutional Church in the temporal world.

The challenge of today where new problems are arising and ideas are abroad which can undermine religion and human society itself requires lay people who can explain and defend their faith. How, in a modern, over-busy, over-specialized world, can a lay person know enough about the Bible and Christian doctrine to be able to "think theologically" about all the areas of his life in which he should act in a Christian way? We have tried many things — study sessions, congresses, periods of recollection, spiritual exercises, frequent meetings, conferences, books and periodicals; but we know we reach only a small proportion of our laity.

We also find that in addition to the deepening of the spiritual life there is a need for a re-learning of the "true mission" of the Church. The task of re-learning the task of the Church as well as the task of the laity today are certainly areas in which Catholics and Protestants can most fruitfully work together. Catholic and Protestant lay people share a common life in communities and in the world of work. As they learn to serve and witness together, the mission of Christ in the world can be greatly strengthened.

Fr. Sloyan At Temple

Washington — (NC) — Father Gerard Sloyan, head of the religious education department at the Catholic University of America here, will leave this year to accept a faculty position in the department of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Father Sloyan, a well known scholar and author, has been at Catholic University for 17 years, and has held his present position for the last 10.

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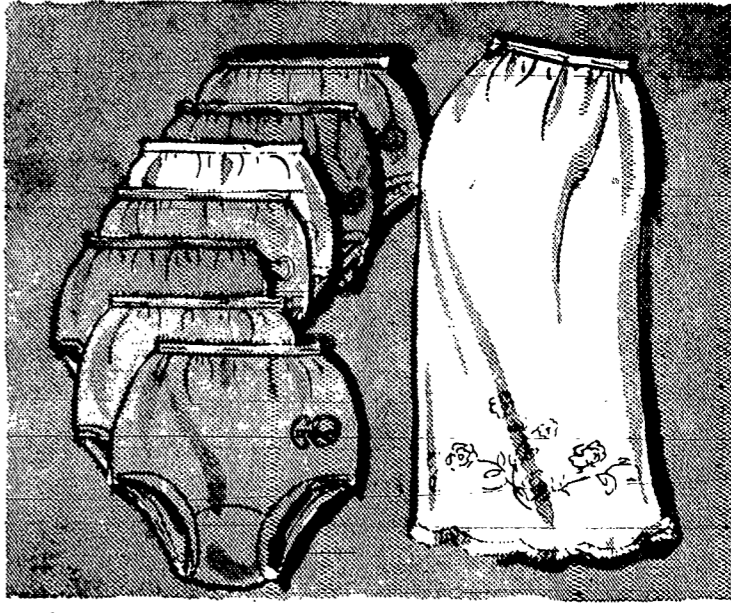


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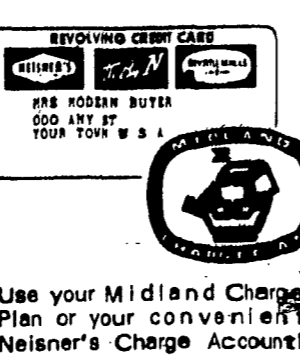
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